

I want to thank this esteemed committee for the opportunity to speak before you today.

I am a birthmother. My son was given up for adoption in 1961.

I was here on 3/17/2010 and listened to the testimony given that day. I heard from adoptees who are only asking for the right to their Original Birth Certificate. They are not alone.

I heard from an adoptee who doesn't want to search, but is interested in knowing medical information. Not searching is his right.

I heard the story of a woman named Ann who was traumatized when she was found by the child she had given up for adoption in Wisconsin!

The point that has been lost in testimony thus far is this: our bills are not designed to "open adoption records," but to give adoptees access to their OWN birth certificates, a right granted to every other U.S. citizen.

I've also heard the adoptees born between 1945 and 1980 referred as "children"! The oldest of these adoptees is now 65, and the youngest is approaching 30!!! These are *adults* we are talking about! People who have married and raised families. People who have the right to vote. They have the right to buy houses and pay taxes. Yet these are the very people the State of Michigan denies their right of their OBC.

You may not know that when our children were born we were told to

"get on with your lives and forget about the child we gave birth to". Many women did that. Ann is an example. We lived our lives in shame and secrecy. We didn't tell anyone what we had done. Society put the letter A on our chests. After a while we may have even started to believe the lies and denial that had become our lives. But, every time we told our lie we thought about our child. We never forgot them. Their birth was a fact of life... our life.

Many of us realized that we could no longer go on "living the lie". We started to search for our children. It was in 1990, when I started my search, that I found out that I was not entitled to his information and mine was "sealed" to him. I was amazed! I was never asked, nor was I promised this!

You may not be able to understand what the veil of secrecy does to a woman. It affects your whole being. It makes you deny who you are and what you are.

It was the most liberating thing in my life when I was finally able to tell my daughter she had a brother. She had always wanted one as she was an only child. My sister and brothers were amazed but understood. After I found him and he agreed to meet with me I went on to tell others. My extended family was loving and caring when they found out. My friends had had no idea, but it didn't make them reject me. As I told everyone else I knew, I found out that I was not the only one! There were scores of people who came up to me and told me about someone they knew, if not themselves, who were

touched by adoption. There are a lot of people out there who have been.

As for the medical aspect. Back in 1961 I only knew that diabetes and epilepsy ran in my family. I didn't know that so did breast, uterine and prostate cancer. I did not know of the strokes and heart problems that would befall my family. If I had not searched and found my son, he would not be aware of those problem.

I don't know how mature you thought you were when you were a teenager. I'm sure most of you thought you were "all grown up". You could conquer the world. As you grew older you got your driver's license after showing that you really existed by presenting your OBC. Did you read the fine print when you signed the paperwork for your first new car? Your first credit card? Your new home? I doubt it, as most of us didn't and still don't.

I know that when I signed the paperwork to give my son up for adoption I did not read the "fine print". I was upset, shamed and frankly terrified. I signed because I was told to. I was not told that I was signing away the right of my son to have access to his own OBC.

But this bill is not a bill to open adoption records!!! It is a bill to give adoptees the right to their own birth certificate. The birth certificate that they were born with. The one that the State of Michigan decided to deny them the moment they were adopted and they were given their new name.

The State of Michigan has denied my son's right to his certificate based on lies of confidentiality. The State of Michigan has denied him that right even though he is a born citizen of this country.

I am an amateur genealogist. He comes from a long line of Americans. His great grandfather paved the streets of Michigan one brick at a time. His ancestors bred and raced the great Dan Patch, a harness race horse. His ancestors fought in the Revolutionary War. And going back further, his ancestors signed the Mayflower Compact.

And yet, the State of Michigan has decided that because he was adopted during a certain period in time, he has no right to his OBC only because he was adopted. This state is denying my son of his rights given to him under the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

From another Michigan birthmother, Jo Swanson, are these facts:

"A citizen's authentic birth certificate is a vital statistics document of U.S. citizenship archived in a state vital statistics office. Whatever path that citizen's life may take, adopted or not, should not authorize the falsification of his authentic document and impound the original. Many other documents will chronicle and define that citizen's life over the years, but his OWN document of U.S. citizenship - his certificate of birth - is sacrosanct and must be made accessible to him. If one state recognizes that right, then ALL must recognize it.

And here's what an adoptee's birth certificate is NOT:

- It is NOT a confidential delivery, medical or hospital record of the woman who gave birth to him.
- It is NOT a weapon to be wielded by activists on both sides of the battle over abortion.
- It is NOT the property of adoption brokers who benefitted, financially and behaviorally, from the transactions.
- It is NOT the property of state legislators, who are subject to influence by individuals and organizations with their own axes to grind."
- It is NOT unworthy as a true record of a U.S. citizen's birth simply because that citizen was born to an unmarried, or poor, or troubled mother who was unable to parent.
- It is NOT documentation defining him as the product of his mother's "reproductive freedom."

The reality for today's post-9/11 adoptees:

- **The amended birth certificate is NOT acceptable as a substitute for the original in some federal venues. New Homeland Security measures requiring proof of citizenship don't recognize amended birth certificates, costing adoptees great amounts of time, money, and stress in attempting to get passports, certain licenses, and other documents. Michigan has generously ameliorated this problem by offering, for a \$40 fee, to amend the already-amended birth certificate with a false date of registration - the date from the original. This means that, in most cases, the adoptee is registered as having been born to his adoptive parents before his birthmother had even relinquished her parental rights. This is an abomination.**

It's important to recognize that the entitlement adoptees seek does

not constitute NEW rights, but the restoration of rights that were theirs decades ago, and then swept from under them in an attempt to create the illusion that adopted children were "born to" their adoptive parents.

This sacred right was recognized back in 1949 by the U.S. Children's Bureau, predecessor of the Child Welfare League of America, which emphasized the importance of the adoptee's "right to inspect or to secure a certified copy of the original birth certificate." Reference: "The Confidential Nature of Birth Records," available on the University of Oregon website:

<http://www.uoregon.edu/~adoption/archive/UscbTCNOBR.htm>

You see... my son was born with a name. He was issued a birth certificate. Then he was adopted and his name was changed and his birth certificate was falsified to show his adopted name. He should be entitled to the OBC because that is part of who he is, and will always be.

I ask you to pass these bills and give my son, and all adoptees, their constitutional right to their own birth certificate.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.
Lynn Gipson